

# Maryland Infant Mortality Rate Drops to 10 Year Low Preliminary Numbers Show Progress, Much More to Accomplish

## Department of Health & Mental Hygiene News Release

**BALTIMORE, MD (July 21, 2010)** - John M. Colmers, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), told members of the Maryland General Assembly's Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families today that the statewide rate of infant mortality in Maryland has declined to the lowest annual rate in ten years.

Preliminary figures indicate that Maryland's infant mortality rate dropped 10 percent in 2009. There were 7.2 infant deaths recorded per 1,000 live births statewide, down from 8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008.

Reducing infant mortality is one of the O'Malley/Brown Administrations 15 strategic priorities to improve the quality of life in Maryland.

"I believe that it's within our capacity and our conscience as Marylanders to dramatically reduce infant mortality in our State. And so we've set the big goal in our Administration of reducing infant mortality and saving more than 60 young lives per year," said Governor O'Malley. "It's been said that to save just one life is to have saved the entire world. As Marylanders, we're united by our belief in the dignity of every individual and our understanding that there is no such thing as a spare Marylander."

"This represents progress and it is heartening to know that our efforts so far may have saved lives and improved health care for women and their babies," said John M. Colmers, DHMH Secretary. "To make sure the progress continues, we've intensified this program because every expectant mother in Maryland needs comprehensive health care and every newborn deserves a healthy beginning and the best possible chance to grow and thrive."

While the 10 percent decline in Maryland's infant mortality rate represents significant progress, the numbers show more must be done to target infant mortality within the African-American community. To that end, DHMH and its state and local partners in the public and private sectors have focused and coordinated multiple programs in three jurisdictions where the challenges are greatest. Baltimore City, Prince George's County and Somerset County have concentrated their outreach and offerings to women of childbearing age that includes pre-pregnancy health services, pre and postnatal services as well as comprehensive follow up care for new mothers and their babies.

"These efforts go beyond standard pre-natal care which remains a key element to ensure every child is born healthy," said Frances Phillips, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. "Ideally, we need to reach every at-risk mother-to-be before they get pregnant so they will be prepared, when the day comes, for a robust, full term pregnancy that delivers a healthy baby."

Efforts now focused on reducing infant mortality in these three jurisdictions are expected to produce improvements for mothers and babies statewide. The leading causes of infant mortality are preterm/low birth weight births, congenital anomalies, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Preterm/low birth weight births are associated with 2/3 of all infant deaths.

For more information on the DHMH and Local Health Department infant mortality efforts:

[DHMH Plan for Reducing Infant Mortality in Maryland](#)  
[Baltimore City: B'more for Healthy Babies](#)  
[Prince George's County Tapestry Program](#)